

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

April 7, 2014

Town Hall – Lower Level Conference Room L101

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Chairperson Castelle called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.
- II. Roll Call – Members present: Clarke Castelle, Chairperson; Myra Cohen, Daniel Dinunzio (left at 6:47 PM), Scott Soares (arrived at 5:13 PM), Bill DeBlasio, and Jen Win-Johnson. Others present: Members of the public; Stephen Woods, Mayor; John Salomone, Town Manager; Ed Moriarty, Downes Construction Company; Dave King, Kaestle Boos Associates; Lou Jachimowicz, Board of Education Chief Finance and Operations Officer; Bob Korpak, Director of Facilities Management; Bruce Till, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.
- III. Public Participation – Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive. She has been to most of the meetings that have gone on for the past two to two and a half years. She tries to stay on top of things, so she finds that she still has many concerns and questions. When she walked in tonight she really couldn't believe what is up on the screen. It is exactly what she said would happen a year and half ago. It started out as Town Hall Renovations, Town Hall-Community Center, and now it is Community Center-Town Hall. This is exactly what has been occurring. She would be interested in seeing the initial plans presented by Amenta Emma, in which Parks and Recreation were kept within the Town Hall building while renovating the rest. How would that design look in light of the present budget and needs of all the departments? She was initially attending these meetings because there was no discussion on whether or not to have a separate building for Parks and Recreation, but only where it should go. Second item, the initial charge of this Committee was, as far as she knows, to renovate Town Hall to address the needs of the building, roof, heating and the departments whose job it is to run this town. Until recently, this hadn't taken a back seat, it hasn't even been in the car. How could we have gotten so far off the track that one department takes precedence over all others? This again, goes back to what is up on the wall. She fears that the Town Hall has become an afterthought. If this, in fact, is not the case, then Paul Newman said it best in Cool Hand Luke, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." What has been presented and perceived by the public has been focused on new building for Parks and Recreation and not the renovation

of Town Hall. She would hope there is a master plan. We have heard the Library has been consulted. In fact the most recent drawings of the site plan include specific space for enlarging the Library, as well as providing space. Until we find out that the Library is in fact on board with this design, she respectfully requests that it be saved on the site plan presented as “wishful thinking”, not fact. Parking has been brought up as a significant need. Although we had been led to believe that realigning Garfield Street is no longer part of the plan, in fact, there is still \$650,000 allocated in the CIP fund for Realignment/Site Improvements. Early discussion has led her to believe that the bus garage may be moved to Alumni Road at some future time. If this is done additional parking, at least for employees, would be made available, thus alleviating the need for creating an asphalt jungle. To the best of her knowledge, no inclusion in either building space for the Newington Art League has been allocated. Are there any plans for that, which the public is unaware of? She suspects that somewhere, somehow, money will be found to fund this separate building and do something in Town Hall. We have been assured at other junctures that there is always contingency money that most assuredly will not be used, at least in its entirety. She must confess, she feels that one should always count on it being used, for the expected and the unexpected. Saying that several million dollars needs to be budgeted, but won't be used, appears to be perilously close to irresponsibility. There is an old adage, “Don't just stand there, do something.” She respectfully requests that, in light of what has occurred, that the Committee do the opposite, don't just do something, stand there and take a long, hard, in-depth assessment of what is best for the Town as a whole, taking into consideration that there is always the unexpected. On numerous occasions she heard that if this plan did not work, to include Parks and Recreation at Town Hall could always be revisited. Now, she believes, is the time to do that.

Peter Arburr, 133 Tremont Street. The focus of the previous meeting was on the building. He hopes to gain a better perspective of the project. Are the site improvements at the Community Center by Town forces or by the Contractor?

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. She is aghast at the title on the screen. She is only hearing about the new Community Center. She referred to minutes from several meetings in 2012 and 2013. There was discussion early on about a title search for the property where the Community Center would go. Can the Community Center be built there? She was initially led to believe that the Parks and Recreation building would include all programs. Now it is being said that all off site programs will stay off site. The busway got pushed through. The citizens should be informed.

Dan Shaw, 95 Audobon Avenue. In December 2012 he urged renovation of the existing Community Center. He was told the costs to renovate would be higher than the costs for new construction. Nobody looked at the actual costs to renovate. What new programs will be enabled by the new Community

Center? The second problem he has is the taking of open space. The town has been vocal in support of open space. He urges the Committee to consider renovation rather than a new building in the park.

- IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes –Mr. Dinunzio made a motion that the amended minutes of the March 17, 2014 meeting be approved as written. Second by Mr. DeBlasio. The motion passed unanimously.
- V. Preliminary Soft Costs Estimate – The itemized soft costs were presented by Mr. Salomone. They were broken out by those that would be bonded and those that would be paid through the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) without borrowing. Design fees, traffic, geotechnical, and industrial hygienist fees were in the first category. Funding for these costs would be borrowed and are budgeted at \$1,814,770. All the remaining soft costs would be paid through the CIP. These include furniture, fixtures and equipment plus wiring, relocation and several other items. These totaled \$1,685,840. It is staff's recommendation that this budget be considered by the Project Building Committee and that the \$1,814,770 be included in any bonding.

Mrs. Cohen asked about other soft costs that had already been spent. Mr. Baron distributed a financial status of the project showing expenditures to date and outstanding encumbrances. Mrs. Win-Johnson asked for an explanation of what expenditures and encumbrances were. Expenditures are expenses that have already been spent. Encumbrances are monies that have been reserved but not actually paid. Mrs. Cohen asked what the total costs were. These would be the total of the \$26,666,431 from the Downes Construction budget, the \$3,500,610 in budgeted soft costs, the \$168,421.13 in expenditures to date, and the \$38,507.50 in outstanding encumbrances (this totals \$30,373,969.63 – Editor). Mr. Castle asked what the amount to be bonded would be. This total would be arrived at by subtracting out \$1,685,840 of the soft costs, the \$168,421.13 in expenditures to date, and the \$38,507.50 in outstanding encumbrances (leaving a total of \$28,481,201 – Editor). At the beginning of construction Downes Construction likes to see a 5% contingency. It is 10% now because budgets are at the conceptual design level. The construction manager's March 17th budget summary was presented by Mr. Salomone. It shows a higher amount for contingency now than it will later because design hasn't drilled down to the level of greater detail. This was done to avoid greater architectural fees that would be wasted if the referendum does not pass. This budget also shows escalation costs to reflect the three years it will take to complete the project. Mr. Moriarty feels that the escalation is realistic. The escalation factors are 4% for the Community Center and 6% for Town Hall. Mrs. Win-Johnson asked about the General Conditions. They include staff, safety items, enclosures, and temporary utilities. Mrs. Win-Johnson questioned the cost, which was determined to be \$33,900 per month. Mrs. Win-Johnson asked what level of design the project is at now. The initial response was that the project was now between conceptual and schematic

design. The Project Architect later clarified this by stating that the project was now at the schematic design level. The budget allows the construction manager to take into account increases in costs as the design is refined. The \$26 million figure includes contingency. The construction cost per square foot is very much in line with what is happening in the industry. Mr. Till asked the construction manager to clarify earlier statements on the costs per square foot for a metal building vs. the cost per square foot for a brick and mortar construction. A metal building was priced out for the Community Center. As a standard building the cost was \$1,918,974. as a metal building, the cost was \$1,300,000. The Town saved \$619,000 by selecting the metal building construction. Mr. Moriarty recently got a third price for a metal building. It was within \$9,000 of the previous budget. Mrs. Win-Johnson noted that she has been asking for a benchmark. Although there are general construction costs per square foot, they will vary some from building to building.

Mrs. Cohen stated that there is a self-imposed cap on bonding and on the CIP. As a result, the project will not increase the mill rate on its own. The total cost is roughly double what was originally anticipated. This pushes other projects down the line. She asked what other projects would be affected. Where will these projects end up going? Mrs. Win-Johnson stated that if we had used a benchmark the Committee would have known what the cost was and it would not have doubled. Mr. Salomone noted that this was a working Committee, that has been working with the architect and the construction manager to develop particular options. The Committee has been very transparent. Things have evolved over the past few years. Mr. Salomone presented the table from the CIP on bonding. It shows that even with a total anticipated debt of \$24,245,000 in 2015-16, this would still allow for a school project and a pool replacement to be bonded in 2018-19 for an additional \$8,294,000. The debt service schedule showed that at an outstanding maximum amount of \$30,000,000, debt service would be at \$2,902,691 in 2020 and the Town would still have flexibility. The Town is fiscally sound, even with taking on this level of debt. It is not doubling in cost. Mr. Salomone cannot identify which projects would be displaced or relocated because he does not know what the Town Council's priority would be. The bonding is not a "do this or do that" option. Mr. Dinunzio stated that it would be hard to pinpoint what wouldn't be funded moving forward. The Town Hall has a glaring need. The Town Council has to set priorities and will determine the projects in the CIP. Mr. Castelle noted that the debt service ratio is higher for neighboring towns. If the Town did nothing, it would not have any debt in ten years. Mrs. Win-Johnson stated that the Committee needed to put forth the best recommendation and budget it could.

Mrs. Win-Johnson asked if space usage in the Town Hall was increasing. There will be 65,000 square feet of construction at the Town Hall. The project will free up space. It will decrease the footprint of Town Hall through demolition of the current Mortensen Community Center. Space will increase

in square footage through the development of the courtyard hallway and atrium. Chairperson Castelle noted that part of the plan was also to add offices in parts of the current Mortensen Community Center. Mr. Salomone pointed out some of the advantages of the new community center: day care could be brought back to the Community Center, the Town wouldn't have to duplicate locker space if the pool were to be relocated next door, and space in the current Mortensen Community Center could be used as part of the Town Hall renovations. It was estimated that about 9,000 square feet of the current Community Center could be re-used.

Mayor Woods observed that the process has taken time. He credited the Project Building Committee. He feels they have done a good job on a difficult project. They have thought through every single step of the process. The previous members of the Building Committee made the decision to separate the two buildings. Actual cost was approximately \$165 per square foot for the renovation work to the section of the Town Hall Lower Level where tonight's meeting is being held, and roughly \$200 per square foot for the renovations to the back half of the Lower Level that took place later. Materials are going up, there are constant increases. The Committee had an idea of what it wanted to do and that budget has changed. The Town could renovate the Town Hall as it is and end up spending three-quarters to seven-eighths of the same amount and have a building that doesn't function well.

Mrs. Cohen asked for a larger diagram that is easier to read, that identifies what is here now and the changes that are being proposed. Mr. King agreed to provide that to her. Mr. Salomone agreed that the Town needs to communicate what the changes are and what will happen. He also mentioned that there was no editorial meaning in the title of the Project Architect's presentation that was up on the screen at the start of the meeting. The budget calls for spending twice as much on the Town Hall as the Community Center. Both projects are very much integrated. Mr. Castelle suggested that an overlay or side by side drawings of the proposed and existing floor plans would help demonstrate the changes. There would be total reprogramming of the space on the Main Level and Upper Level of Town Hall.

Update on Design Concepts and Schematic Design Estimate – Presented by Mr. King, the Project Architect. To clarify earlier discussion, what he has shown and is showing are documents at the schematic design level. He gave a power point presentation which started with the existing site plan. Next was the site plan proposed for the Town Hall. There would be parking changes. The Library add-on was shown as a placeholder. The realignment of Garfield Street is no longer being shown. The next exhibit was on parking lot regrading, showing the grade changes that would be made to the Town Hall upper parking lot. Currently there is a seven foot grade change. The project would reduce this to three feet of grade change at the front entrance. The ramp in front of the Town Hall is not to code and would be re-built and

shortened. There would be a receiving area for the food pantry. This was followed by exhibits of an exterior perspective at the main entry, a perspective at the courtyard (with an open courtyard), an interior perspective at the courtyard (also with an open courtyard), an interior perspective at the atrium (instead of the open courtyard), a second interior perspective of the atrium from a different angle, an exterior perspective of the Garfield Street side of the Town Hall (where the gym is currently located), a site plan of the new Community Center, an exterior perspective of the new Community Center (with metal building components), a perspective of the front entry of the new Community Center, a perspective of the new Community Center gymnasium with a drop down curtain and portable bleachers, and a perspective of the fitness room in the new Community Center.

Mrs. Cohen mentioned that the Committee on Aging had requested a presentation from the Project Architect as well. Chairperson Castelle referred back to the interior perspective of the Town Hall atrium. The Town's core services would be accessible off the central atrium courtyard. The perspective presented is to scale. The proposed new Council Chambers are in the current Parks and Recreation space. The atrium space can be utilized by Town residents. There will be a new elevator near the main entrance to the Upper Level. Access to the Lower Level would be from the current elevator, which would be refurbished. Mr. King reviewed the Town Hall floor plans, showing where offices will be located on the revised Main Level and Upper Level plans. Kaestle Boos can present this so viewers can flip back and forth easily on their computers. Mr. Moriarty suggested showing the present and proposed circulation patterns.

Mr. Salomone concluded by recommending the project and the budget, as presented, to the Committee. Given that two Committee members were not present, it was determined that the Committee would not act on this recommendation until the next meeting, which would be held in a few weeks. The project would go from the Committee to the Town Council. The Town Council would receive a presentation.

- VI. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – Mr. Salomone stated that the open space discussion was important. He presented an exhibit showing, through the use of green rectangles superimposed on an aerial photograph of Mill Pond Park, the space that could be used for soccer fields once the Mill Pond pool is relocated. He felt this would replace any play area that was lost and would reclaim the property that is adjacent to the pond. Relocating the bus garage is not part of the plan but it is a long range goal. Mr. DeBlasio distributed copies of the Strategic Master Plan for the Parks and Recreation System that was adopted in 2007. This Master Plan called for replacement of the Mortensen Community Center. This needs analysis is available on-line, under the Town's website. Mr. DeBlasio felt it would be good for the public to see this document.

- VII. Public Participation – Peter Arburr, 133 Tremont Street. Reference was made to a metal building for the Community Center. He urged the Committee to consider this as a campus. The final product should be compatible to the other buildings and their architecture. Speaking to the comment that the project would not have an effect on the mill rate, he can't see how the Town can bond and not raise the mill rate. This would have to have an effect somehow.

Tom Bowen, 22 Woods Way. It sounds like you are moving towards a conclusion, but he would like to give some different ideas and thoughts before you make your final decision. A couple of brief comments about what we just saw on open space. We're losing open space. There is no other way to look at it. You may be able to build the two fields at different locations but you are building those two fields on open space, so net-net the 32,000 square feet, probably divided by two is 16,000 to 17,000 square feet you are going to lose of open space. You are going to drive past the farm and then ultimately you'll see a big brick building sitting on Willard. We mentioned it would be really nice to get rid of the bus garage because of the eyesore. More people go down Willard than go down Garfield. More people are going to see that open space gone with that building there. He wants to talk briefly on cost. Have we built in a lot of the work that is going to be done that will be taken away from Contractors and that Town employees are going to be doing, a lot of the site work and so forth? He is assuming that is built in but he thinks it is something we should think about. There are firm plans to move the pool and he thought there were firm plans to move Our Children's Place. If that is the case those costs should be included in this project. If they are in phase 3, phase 4, whatever, the public should know exactly what you are looking to do. This goes back to the last time he was here and then there was an article that came out in the newspaper. He had said he would really like to see Town Hall renovated and the gym kept where it was and renovated. After he spoke, the Town Manager, for some reason, chastised him for not being here sooner. This was also reflected by the reporter who said he aggressively questioned some of the things he had to say. He will tell you, as a Councilor and on the Board of Parks and Recreation for ten years, we never made someone from the public feel uncomfortable for coming whenever they did in the project, and he took great offense to that. Having said that, if in fact the current renovation of Town Hall is approximately \$18,000,000 and the current building of the new Parks and Recreation building is approximately \$8,000,000, that is \$26,000,000. The paper says if we kept the gym and renovated all of Town Hall the project would cost us \$35,000,000. Again this is way too simplistic for what we are doing here but if, in fact, renovating Town Hall, including knocking down Mortensen gym is \$18,000,000, therefore we are saying to build another gym there is \$17,000,000, to get to the 35. If it is \$18,000,000 to renovate and tear down the gym, and the newspaper and construction manager says it is \$35,000,000 to keep the gym there the implication is that the gym would cost \$17,000,000 of the bill. He

doesn't understand that math. It is very easy to scare the public with numbers, but he would love at any point in time, if someone wanted to call him in, he would take his own time to come in, and explain it to him, and he will come back to the next meeting and apologize, but that is what was left in the paper. It just doesn't make a lot of sense to him. Contingency plans. We are saying that 10% is way too much, we're never going to use all our contingency, and you might be right, if you are in a recession you never are going to use the contingency. But there are a few people sitting at the table here right now who went through large building projects that were well thought out. We had a guy from construction chairing them and we blew through our contingency and had to cut parts of the project. The idea that you can never go through your contingency, it just isn't true. Now again, it has been a long time since he sat on a building committee, a long time since he sat on the Council, things may have changed. But he is now hearing the exact same things that he heard when prices were escalating and we were using our contingency, as compared to the time when we were coming in below budget. Unless we are no longer in a recession, goods and services are rising dramatically. So he doesn't think we can willy-nilly just take apart the numbers the contractor has put in front of us and say this isn't going to happen. It has happened before where you have used every penny of your contingency. Some people saw his name in the paper and they have been coming up to him about this issue. Again, he hasn't checked these numbers but it is something to think about. Someone told him that over the last ten years per capita income in Newington has dropped about 10%. The numbers he has are somewhere around \$47,000 going down to around \$43,000. Taxes have gone up dramatically since then. He thinks that, and he hasn't been to all the meetings, but we have gotten away from who the constituents are in town, who the residents are. They are not the people on Barn Hill. That is a very small part. They are not the people who live in his neighborhood. They are a very small part of the population. You're asking them to foot the bill on this. Now, although you can explain to Mr. Arburr why this will directly impact the mill rate, there will be a cost. He can never remember a time, and he was on for a while when the CIP was around, that a single penny was ever returned to the Town Council from the CIP that wasn't used. There is always a need for CIP. Always. To say that here are all our plans right now and we can take a larger portion and put it to cover our debt, it's not true. It's just not true. The CIP, this is exactly what it is built for, but the Town has always had a conservative financial approach. This is not a conservative approach to a building. The Mayor said this is only $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{7}{8}$ of the cost that has to happen no matter what. He just took a real quick look at the atrium, it is a 17% increase in the base cost of the building. He worked for CIGNA for years in their stock building, beautiful building. All glass on the outside, all glass on the inside, glass roof. Nobody wants to build that building again. These huge atriums cost money to heat. They look beautiful but these wide open areas cost a lot of money to heat. What is one of the major problems in the United States right now? It is the cost of energy, and what are we going to do with our building, an unbelievable building with almost a three

story atrium? Who is going to heat that? There is a cost to decisions you make here. He might disagree a little bit with the Mayor. Mr. Bowen drives a RAV4. He could have gotten a little bit more utility with a Lexus. The Lexus has less speed, a lot of great amenities, but you know what? He doesn't need those amenities. He didn't buy it and he doesn't think the people in Newton care if we have the nicest Town Hall on the east coast. He really doesn't think they care. And if you told the public that we were going to save \$10,000,000 and when they walked into Town Hall it might take them a minute or two to figure out which way to get from one office to another? He spends as much time in Town Hall as most residents, that's what he does for a living. Yes, invariably every time he is in Town Hall he gives at least one person directions trying to read a sign, saying "where am I supposed to go?" But he bets you, if you asked the residents, and this is a little bit off base, but, paying attention to the budget, there are some concerns we are not going to be able to fund gifted programs in this town. One of the reasons he moved here is he has two sons. One of them was in the gifted program. The gifted program is critical in this town. We need to fund the education of the top students the same as the rest. He bets you if you asked everybody in town to fund the gifted program or have our own fitness center that is going to cost at least, they are all going to be \$3,000 to \$4,000 each because that is what they cost, its \$50,000 in just equipment. This is what you are going to show the public. People are hurting out there, taxes are going up. He got beat by a mayor that, one of the reasons he won was he said we're going to keep taxes low, we're going to keep it below 3%. And now we're saying we're going to build a place like this, and this is what the public wants. He doesn't think it is what they want. He thinks the Committee has to consider that before it makes its final decision. He realizes it is just a recommendation, and he applauds Mr. Shaw for his questions. He asked for a simple thing. Come up with a base renovation. This Committee started off as Town Hall Renovations, that's what it started off as. It is not that any more. It is: we're going to build an 8-9 million dollar recreation center and then we'll try to figure out how to renovate as cheaply as possible. So that's where you are now. He doesn't think that is what the Committee's initial charge was. Thank you very much for your time.

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive. She is speaking regarding the picture with the three rectangles on it. Please also superimpose the new Community Center, the pool and the playground area to get a sense of what the area will look like.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. When is the Committee going to answer the questions the public have asked? There was a study of space needs done by Kaestle Boos Associates. What are the plans to increase the size of each new department and how do they compare to that study? The Committee approved an advanced level of design to cut down on post referendum fees. Where will the cooling equipment go that is in the current courtyard? Regarding the

traffic that will empty out on Cross Street, what is the impact on Moreland Avenue? She is familiar with the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan. She read aloud the sections from that document regarding open space. She believes she could find many such things for Parks and Recreation. She would like to see the other studies on the Town Hall. She finds that offensive.

Robert Larsson, 41 Buckingham Street. Costs are more than expected to do the project right. His issue is with breaking off the Community Center. The separate building is not sustainable. When he walks to the proposed site with his family there are no walks, no trees, it is difficult to walk there. He wants to have a campus. There should be more functional space. Look at the costs to renovate the existing Community Center. They will be similar. You already have parking at the Town Hall. A square foot cost number should be done to do what you are proposing for elsewhere and keep it here.

- VIII. Response to Public Participation – Mr. Castelle observed that there was a long list of questions. Logistically it would be hard to respond to all of them, virtually impossible this evening. Regarding the space needs study, he offered to share that report with Ms. Lyons. The square footage in the study is roughly equivalent with what Kaestle Boos Associates has designed. The Art League is at the Kellogg Eddy House, and it is anticipated that they will remain there. No title search is required as the Town owns the land where the Community Center is proposed to be built. Mr. Castelle will review his notes and will try to respond further.
- IX. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.